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## WALLEYE POSSESSION LIMIT CHANGE

### BACKGROUND

My name is Jack Leonhardt. I am a member of the West Michigan Walleye Club of Grand Rapids, MI. I am on the Executive Board and also the Club Liaison to the Michigan DNR and also the Michigan United Conservation Club. In the past I have worked with the DNR on many occasions to provide both help and information for our Club and Michigan anglers in general. I am also on two DNR Citizen Committees.

### HISTORY

This process for which we are here today began on June 22, 2009. I received an e-mail from one of our Club members in reference to the Michigan Fishing "Possession Limit". It seems that he and other anglers have been involved with the DNR Conservation Officer's over on the east side of the state over the "One Day Possession Limit" of 5 Walleyes. The problem comes when anglers travel across the state, in this case from Grand Rapids to the Detroit River, Saginaw Bay, Lake St. Claire or wherever and spend 3, 4 or more days in the area. After spending money in local bait shops, gas stations, motels, restaurants, camp grounds, etc., they are only allowed to have 5 Walleye (one days limit) in their possession or to take home. If they have more than the 5 legal fish they are subjected to a possible fine. So I was asked if there was someone in the DNR that I could talk to about this. I called Jay Wesley, Supervisor Of Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit, whom I have worked with many times. Jay told me that the "Possession Limit Law" was a statute and could only be changed by the State Legislature. I asked him how do I do that. Jay said that probably the best way would be to go through the MUCC. I had heard that a change in The Possession Law Amendment had been introduced a few years ago when it was part of a License Increase Bill that did not get passed at that time. I wrote a letter to Representative Dave Hildenbrand and Senator Mark Jansen, stating the above and asked if they could help us (West Michigan Walleye Club) in any way. I also went to the MUCC and showed them my letter to make sure that I was following the right procedure and see if they had any thoughts on the matter. The West Michigan Walleye Club is affiliated with MUCC. After talking with them I sent off my letters. Representative Hildenbrand called me shortly afterwards and said he was interested and would be introducing a bill on our behalf to the Legislature.

In September I went to the Annual Sportsman's Day Event at the Capital Building and was introduced to Representative Hildenbrand and his office staff and other Legislators by the MUCC. They also introduced me to Goeff Hansen at which time during our talk he mentioned that he too had introduced a similar bill. I thought, "WOW this is great". Now there are 2 bills that will be heard by The Committee, which brings us to today.

## CONCLUSION

I have seen copies of both bills (5481 and 5564) and see where they differ. When I originally sent my letters to Representative Hildenbrand and Senator Jansen, I had asked for a 2-day Possession Limit for Walleye, which is what our club mainly fishes for.

In talking to Representative Hildenbrand's office I understand that things can be changed here in The Committee. While we are here today, would it be possible to change The Possession Limit Law to 3 days and also to extend this to all species. This would help all of the other fishermen i.e. Bass, Pike, etc. The salmon fishermen already have this. The DNR people that I have talked to are in accord with a 2-day limit. I'm not sure about the 3-day limit. I am not sure how the additional day (3 days) would work for them. Maybe they could be approached on this matter as it would then be equal across the board for all species. Now don't misunderstand me. I am not looking for the world with a fence around it. The West Michigan Walleye Club will be happy with whatever the Legislature and The Department of Natural Resources decides.

Thank you all for your help. It is greatly appreciated by the West Michigan Walleye Club and all the anglers across Michigan. I have heard that some of you are fishermen too. Maybe it will help you also.

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